

# A Primer on Matlab

by

Dr. Frank M. Kelso

Mechanical Engineering Department  
University of Minnesota

Release Version 2.00    January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2002

Matlab (“Matrix Laboratory”) is one of the many interactive computational tools used by engineers and scientists to solve mathematical problems and graph the solutions.

Originally developed for numerical analysis classes at the University of New Mexico and Stanford University in the late 1970’s, it has evolved from a teaching aid into an “industrial strength” technical computing environment. Some of Matlab’s competitors include Mathematica, MathCAD, TK Solver, and EES.

What sorts of things can Matlab do? It can function as a simple calculator, solve matrix equations, differentiate and integrate, determine maxima and minima, interpolate, and construct 2D and 3D graphs. It has “toolboxes” that allow it to work in specialized domains such as control systems design or signal processing. And, it provides you with a high level programming language and GUI (Graphical User Interface) building capability. Programs written in Matlab are not as fast as those written in a programming language such as C or C++, but that’s the penalty for having lots of features built right in for your convenience. And if it makes sense to program in one of those other languages, Matlab can integrate those programs into its structure as well.

The purpose of this document is to give you an understanding of the main pieces of Matlab, and how they fit together. After reading this, you should be able to write a simple Matlab program to solve the types of equations you’ll see again and again in your undergraduate engineering curriculum. You definitely won’t be an expert with Matlab just by reading this one document, but if you want to improve your Matlab skills there are lots of references available for you to use, and the “help desk” facility built into Matlab is quite good.

Copyright © 2002 by Frank M. Kelso. All rights reserved.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Part I: Matlab Basics

#### Beginning Matlab

- Variables in Matlab
- Choosing variable names
- Stress calculation example, revisited
- Script files

#### Some Useful File Management Commands

#### Scalars

#### Arrays, Vectors, and Matrices

- Example: plotting a sine wave
- Plotting example, continued
- Stress calculation example, revisited
- Arrays and vectors (and matrices)
- Fixing the stress calculation example

### Part II: Basics of Matlab Programming

#### More About Vectors and Matrices

- Creating vectors and matrices
- Colon constructor
- Linspace and logspace commands
- Some useful commands for working with vectors and matrices

#### Function m-files

- “Declaring” the function and passing in information

More about the function declaration line

Matlab Help and the function m-file

### **“If” Statements**

Relational operators

elseif statements

Exercises: conditionals

### **Looping**

for loops

while loops

### **Input and Output**

## **Part III: Graphics and Graphical User Interfaces**

### **Beginning a Program: the CLEAR functions**

#### **2D Plotting**

~~lines, colors, and markers~~

~~xlabels, ylabels, and titles~~

~~hold on, hold off~~

~~grid~~

~~axis~~

#### **3D Plotting**

~~meshgrid~~

### **Appendix A: Solving Differential Equations**

### **Appendix B: Frequency Response Plots**

## Part I: Matlab Basics

Matlab is a very useful tool for solving all sorts of equations, from simple arithmetic (what is  $1 + 2 + 14 + 3$ ) to systems of partial differential equations. After reading Part I, you will be able to use Matlab as a simple adding machine, a graphing calculator, and as a programming language.

### Table of Contents (Part I)

#### Beginning Matlab

- Variables in Matlab
- Choosing variable names
- Stress calculation example, revisited
- Script files

#### Some Useful File Management Commands

#### Scalars

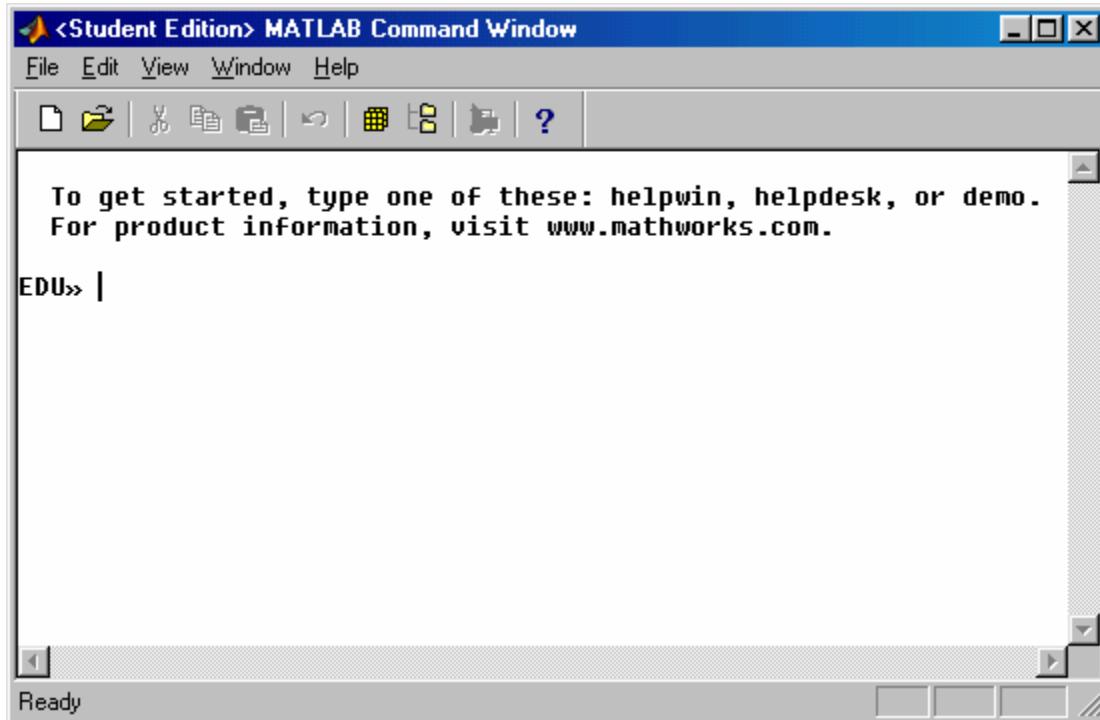
#### Arrays, Vectors, and Matrices

- Example: plotting a sine wave
- Plotting example, continued
- Stress calculation example, revisited
- Arrays and vectors (and matrices)
- Fixing the stress calculation example

## Beginning Matlab

Matlab is available on both Unix machines and PC's. You start Matlab by typing in "matlab" (on a Unix machine) or selecting it from the "start" menu (on a PC). If you're on a PC, you might have to hunt around for it on the start menu: it's probably under the "programs" submenu, but you can always use "find file" if you're having trouble locating it. If you're having trouble finding and running Matlab on your machine, talk to a lab attendant or your instructor or TA.

Once you fire up Matlab on your computer, the "Command Window" will appear on the screen.



Matlab Command Window (Student Version 5.3)

This is the focus of your attention, the place where you will do most of your interacting with Matlab (at least to begin with).

The command window will be labeled "Command Window" in the title bar, and it will contain a prompt. In the student version of Matlab version 5.3, the prompt looks like this:

EDU>>

The professional version of Matlab (which costs a LOT more than the student version) just gives you the “>>” prompt and waits for you to type in a command.

Learning Matlab means memorizing a long list of commands you’ll need in order to solve the problems you want to solve. Fortunately, most of the commands are just what you would expect them to be. For example, to add 42 and 64, you would type in after the prompt,

EDU>> 42+64

And Matlab would respond with the following answer

```
ans =  
106
```

Some other examples of using the command window:

```
EDU>> 4*2 + 5*5 + 2  
ans =  
35
```

```
EDU>> 8 / (2+2)  
ans =  
2
```

```
EDU>> 2^3  
ans =  
8
```

Matlab has all of the basic arithmetic operations you would expect:

Operation	Symbol	Example
Addition	+	$42 + 64$
Subtraction	-	$64 - 42$
Multiplication	*	$5*5$
Division	/	$25/5$
Exponentiation	^	$5^2$

Parentheses are handy for making sure operations occur in the proper order. For example,

```
EDU>> 4+4/2
Ans =
6

EDU>> (4+4)/2
Ans =
4
```

The precedence rules are similar to FORTRAN or C: refer to the Matlab user's manual if you need a refresher. When in doubt, use parentheses to avoid any ambiguities.

Matlab has more than just these basic arithmetic operations built in to it. Like any calculator, it can calculate sine, cosine, tangent, inverses, logs, square roots, and so on. A list of some of the more commonly used functions is provided in Appendix A. The names are (hopefully) intuitive, which means you can often avoid looking things. Some examples are provided below.

```
EDU>> sin(0.5)
ans =
0.4794

EDU>> asin(0.4794)
ans =
0.5000

EDU>> sqrt(4)
ans =
2
```

**Question:** What's the name of the Matlab function for calculating the inverse tangent?

Can you guess, based on your experience with other programming languages?

**Answer:** There are two functions: ATAN and ATAN2 (just like the FORTRAN and C programming languages).

I can never remember whether the x or the y is the first argument to ATAN2. If we're looking at a triangle with a base (x) of 2 and a height (y) of 4, do I enter ATAN2(2, 4) or do I enter ATAN2(4, 2) ?

If you need help answering that question but (like me) don't want to dig out the reference manual, use the "help" command from inside the command window.

```
EDU>> help atan2
```

```
ATAN2 Four-Quadrant inverse tangent.  
ATAN2(Y,X) is the four-quadrant arctangent of the real  
parts of the elements X and Y.  
-pi <= ATAN2(Y,X) <= pi.
```

```
See also ATAN.
```

## Variables in Matlab

Suppose you want to calculate the stress in a rod loaded in axial tension. The formula is

$$\sigma = P / A$$

where

$\sigma$  = stress (psi)

P = axial load (lbs)

A = cross-sectional area =  $\pi d^2 / 4$  square inches

d = diameter of the rod

**Problem:** calculate the stress in a 1" DIA rod when a 1000 lb axial load is applied.

**Solution:**

```

EDU>> P = 1000
P =
1000.00

EDU>> dia = 1
dia =
1.00

EDU>> area = (pi*dia^2)/4
area =
0.7854

EDU>> stress = P/area
stress =
1.2732e+003

```

Just like the C or FORTRAN programming language, we can solve our problem using variables. For this problem, I defined the variables P, dia, area, and stress. Matlab has some built-in (pre-defined) variables too, one of which is "pi."

Notice that Matlab echoed each of my statements. For example, if I type in, “`P = 1000`” then Matlab follows (echoes) with “`P = 1000`”. If I want to suppress echoing, then I terminate each statement with a semi-colon. Here’s the same program using semi-colons.

```
EDU>> P = 1000;
EDU>> dia = 1;
EDU>> area = (pi*dia^2)/4;
EDU>> stress = P/area;
```

To see my results, I examine the value of the variable `stress`:

```
EDU>> stress
stress =
1.2732e+003
```

As you can see, just typing in the name of the variable (*without* the semi-colon) causes Matlab to echo the value of that variable.

### Choosing variable names

There are rules you have to follow when choosing variable names. These are summarized on page 7 of the *Matlab Version 5 User’s Manual*, and are listed below.

- Variable names are case sensitive (e.g. `Stress` and `stress` are two different variables).
- Variable names can contain up to 31 characters: subsequent characters are ignored.
- Variable names must start with a letter.
- Punctuation characters and spaces are not allowed.

A list of Matlab’s pre-defined variable names are also summarized on p.7, and are listed below.

<code>ans</code>	The default variable name used for results
<code>pi</code>	3.1415927...
<code>eps</code>	a very small number (epsilon)
<code>flops</code>	a count of the number of floating point operations

inf	infinity (i.e. 1 divided by zero)
NaN or nan	the abbreviation for “not a number”
i (and j)	the square root of $-1$
nargin	number of input arguments to a function
nargout	number of output arguments
realmin	the smallest usable positive real number
realmax	the largest usable positive real number

Make sure you don't choose one of these names for your own variable!

### Stress Calculation Example, Revisited

Suppose we wanted to calculate the stress for 5 different rod diameters, 0.25", 0.5", 0.75", 1.0", and 1.25". We've already worked out the procedure, so it should be a straightforward job. Will this work?

```
EDU>> dia = 0.25;
EDU>> stress
stress =
1.2732e+003
```

No, it's not working: that's the same stress as before, when `dia` was 1.0 inches. Do you see why this calculation failed?

The first line enters a new value for the variable `dia`, but we never re-calculated stress. To get the new value for stress that corresponds to `dia = 0.25`, we need to re-calculate area, and then re-calculate stress. This is shown below.

```
EDU>> dia = 0.25;
EDU>> area = (pi*dia^2)/4;
EDU>> stress = P/area
stress =
2.0372e+004
```

That's a lot of typing! I had to re-enter each of the calculations that depended on “`dia`.” For this stress calculation example, re-entering the formulas isn't a huge waste of time,

but I'm sure you've seen some lengthy formulas that you would rather NOT type in over and over again.

The solution to this is to enter the formula into a *script file*.

## Script Files

Instead of typing in the same formula to the command window over and over again, let's just type it into a separate text file. We can use any file editor or word processor we want to create a new file, as long as we save the results as a plain ASCII text file. The simplest way to create a new file, though, is to go to Matlab's "File..." menu (top left menu option in the command window's menu bar) and roll down and choose "new...m-file." That will bring up the Matlab's built-in text editor. Use the editor to enter the Matlab commands into the text file one after the other, just as if you were typing them in at the Matlab Command Window; then save the file with a ".m" extension. This file is called a *script file* (or a *script m-file*, because of the ".m" extension on the file name.)<sup>1</sup>

Here's my new m-file that I created using Matlab's text editor.

```
P = 1000;
dia = 1;
area = (pi*dia^2)/4;
stress = P/area
```

I typed these four lines in using the text editor, and then saved it as a text file named "stresscalc.m" using the "File...Save as" option in the text editor window. After saving the file, I can then go back to the command window and type in,

```
EDU>> stresscalc
```

And Matlab executes my `stresscalc` set of commands, with the following result.

```
stress =
1.2732e+003
EDU>>
```

When I typed in "stresscalc" at the command window "EDU>>" prompt, Matlab looked to see if that was the name of a variable in my workspace. It wasn't. So next, Matlab looked to see if "stresscalc" was the name of any Matlab variable or function (like sin or cos). It

---

<sup>1</sup> Note: there are two kinds of m-files: *script* m-files and *function* m-files. Function m-files will be discussed later on.

wasn't. So finally Matlab checked to see if "stresscalc.m" is a file somewhere in its search path, and it found my "stresscalc.m" file. Finally!

Once it found my script file, Matlab opened it up and executed the Matlab commands one after the other, just as if I had typed them in at the command window.

The first three lines calculate P, dia, and area, but the values of those variables aren't reported because each line is terminated by a semi-colon. The final line, however, calculates the stress *and* reports the value, since there is no semi-colon terminator at the end of that line.

A script m-file is a Matlab program. Programming in Matlab consists of writing Matlab commands into a text file, and then executing those commands sequentially by typing the name of the text file in the command window.

Pretty simple.

### Commenting your program

It is *always* a good idea to add comments to your programs. Comments help you remember what the program is doing, and help you "translate" the program into English. Comments in Matlab are added to a program by using the "%" symbol. The "%" symbol tells Matlab to ignore the rest of that line – it's just a comment. I can add a "%" either at the beginning of a line, or after a calculation has taken place, as shown in the example below.

```
% stresscalc.m  script file for calculating stress

P = 1000;                      % P is the applied load
dia = 1;                        % dia is the diameter of the cross-x
area = (pi*dia^2)/4;            % area is the cross-x area
stress = P/area                  % stress is the tensile stress
```

A Commented Version of the `stresscalc.m` Program

## SOME USEFUL FILE MANAGEMENT COMMANDS

We write programs in Matlab by using a text editor to create and edit m-files. To assist this process, Matlab provides us with some commands for working with files. A few of these commands are listed below, but we can access a more complete list from the help desk.

### Working directory

When I created my “stresscalc.m” file using the Matlab text editor, I saved it in Matlab’s *working directory*. I didn’t specify which directory to save the file to, so Matlab saved it to the working directory by default. The working directory is the default directory that Matlab checks first when it’s looking for an m-file.

To see what’s in the working directory, type in

```
EDU>> ls
```

To change the default directory, type in

```
EDU>> cd path
```

Where *path* specifies the new directory you’d like to work out of.

If you want to know which directory you’re currently working out of, type in

```
EDU>> cd
```

or

```
EDU>> pwd
```

If you’ve ever used the UNIX operating system, these commands should all look very familiar!

I have an example of using these “file management” commands, using my own working directory on my own computer. Keep in mind that your results won’t look exactly the same, since you’ll be working on a different computer.

The first command, “`ls`”, lists the contents of my current working directory. You can see that I have two m-files there, `example1.m` and `stresscalc.m`. I decided to make a subdirectory for all of the stress calculation m-files I might write in the future, so I used the command “`mkdir`” to create a subdirectory called “`stresscalcs`”. Matlab created the subdirectory, and then printed out the `EDU>>` prompt when it was done. To see what my working directory looks like now, I used the “`dir`” command. “`dir`” is a DOS-style command that works exactly the same as the “`ls`” UNIX command (i.e. it lists the contents of the current directory.) I used it here to show you that there’s often more than one command that will work. Matlab tries to be “friendly” to both PC and Unix users!

Next, I copied the “stresscalc.m” file to the new subdirectory, and then changed the working directory there as well using the “cd” (change directory) command. I did an “ls” again to make sure the file got copied there, and then I moved back to the original working directory (“cd ..”) and deleted the original `stresscalc.m` file. No sense having two copies of the same file.

## **Listing an m-file**

To take a look at the “stresscalc” m-file, type in

```
EDU>> type stresscalc

% stresscalc.m  script file for calculating stress

P = 1000;
dia = 1;
area = (pi*dia^2)/4;
stress = P/area

EDU>>
```

The “type” command listed the contents of the file “stresscalc.m” on the terminal (as shown above).

## **Editing an m-file**

To make changes to the “stresscalc” m-file, type in

```
EDU>> edit stresscalc
```

This will open up the file “stresscalc.m” in the Matlab editor, just the same as if you had chosen the “File” menu in the Matlab command window, and selected the “Open” option.

## **Summary: Some Useful File Management Commands**

pwd	specify the current (working) directory (“print working directory”)
ls	list the contents of the current directory
dir	same as ls: list the contents of the current directory
cd	change directory
mkdir	make a new subdirectory
copyfile	copy a file
delete	delete the specified file
type	type the contents of the specified file
edit	opens an <u>existing</u> file using the Matlab editor

## SCALARS

So far we've been using Matlab to operate on *scalars* – single values like 2, 3.0, -2.2, or pi. Matlab uses double precision in carrying out its calculations, but prints out values using the *short* format (5 digits of output) by default. Matlab has commands to change the output format, as shown in the example below.

```
EDU» stress = 12000
stress =
12000

EDU» stress2 = stress/7
stress2 =
1.7143e+003

EDU» format long

EDU» stress2
stress2 =
1.714285714285714e+003

EDU» format bank

EDU» stress2
stress2 =
1714.29

EDU»
```

Some of the output formats are shown in the table below. A more complete listing can be found in the Matlab User's Manual.

format short	5 digits displayed
format long	16 digits displayed
format bank	2 digits to the right of the decimal

## Complex Numbers

In addition to real numbers, Matlab also supports complex numbers. The variables i and j are both built-in Matlab variables used to represent the square root of -1.

A complex number is represented by specifying its real and imaginary components, and can be operated on just like a scalar, as shown in the example below.

```

EDU» voltage1 = 3 + 4*i
voltage1 =
3.0000 + 4.0000i

EDU» voltage2 = 3 + 4i
voltage2 =
3.0000 + 4.0000i

EDU» voltage3 = voltage1+voltage2
voltage3 =
6.0000 + 8.0000i

EDU» 3*voltage1
ans =
9.0000 +12.0000i

EDU» voltage4 = voltage1/(2+3i)
voltage4 =
1.3846 - 0.0769i

EDU»

```

As the example illustrates, there's no difference between dividing two real numbers and dividing two complex numbers: all the operations that worked for real numbers work on complex numbers as well. Also, this example demonstrates that Matlab allows you a shortcut for writing complex numbers. I can write either “3 + 4\*i” or “3 + 4i”, dropping the “\*” between 4 and i.

Matlab provides some commands you can use to convert complex numbers back and forth between rectangular and polar form. For the complex number  $3 + 4i$ , you can use **abs** to calculate the magnitude, and **angle** to calculate the angle (in radians).

$$\begin{array}{lll}
\text{Magnitude} & (3^2 + 4^2)^{1/2} & \text{abs} \\
\text{Angle} & \tan^{-1}(4/3) & \text{angle}
\end{array}$$

A Matlab example using these functions is provided below.

```
EDU» voltage1
```

```

voltage1 =
3.0000 + 4.0000i

EDU» mag = abs(voltage1)
mag =
5

EDU» ang = angle(voltage1)
ang =
0.9273

EDU» ang*180/pi
ans =
53.1301

EDU»

```

Notice the conversion from radians to degrees on the last line. Also note: the **abs** function can also be used to calculate the absolute value of a real value.

Two other commands provided by Matlab for working with complex numbers are **real** and **imag**, used to extract the real and imaginary parts of a complex number. This is illustrated in the example below.

```

EDU» a = real(voltage1)
a =
3

EDU» b = imag(voltage1)
b =
4

EDU»

```

**Programming note:** be careful not to accidentally re-define the value of *i* (or *j*). That can be really tough to debug.

```

EDU» i = 1
i =
1

EDU» c = a + b*i
c =
7

```

Example: Accidentally Re-defining the Complex Number “i”

## ARRAYS, VECTORS, AND MATRICES

So far we've been working with scalar values, both real and complex. Matlab prides itself on making *arrays* as easy to manipulate as scalars. Let's look at an example to illustrate this.

### Example: plotting a sine wave

Suppose I want to plot a sine wave over one period. Let  $y = \sin(t)$ , so one full period corresponds to time varying between 0 and  $2\pi$  seconds. If I want to plot 10 evenly spaced data points, I'll need two arrays; one for the time,  $t$ , and one for  $y(t)$ . Here's one way to accomplish this in Matlab.

I'll work right in the command window, although I could just as easily use the editor and create this as an m-file. I'll begin by calculating an appropriate time interval delta that results in 10 time intervals over the  $2\pi$  seconds

```
EDU» delta = (2*pi)/10
delta =
0. 6283
```

Remember: 10 time intervals will require 11 points if we start off at zero!

Now let's create a "time" array to store our eleven points.

```
EDU» time = [0,delta,2*delta,3*delta,4*delta, ...
5*delta,6*delta,7*delta,8*delta,9*delta,10*delta]
time =
Columns 1 through 7
0 0.6283 1.2566 1.8850 2.5133 3.1416 3.7699
Columns 8 through 11
4.3982 5.0265 5.6549 6.2832
```

This is called "direct construction" of an array, because I started off with a square bracket and then listed all of the elements of the array.

Did you notice that I couldn't enter all of the elements on a single prompt line? I got up to  $4*\delta t$  and ran out of room. To continue on the next line, I used 3 dots (...). This indicated to Matlab that I wasn't done with the line yet and would be continuing it on the next line.

Now let's create a second array called `sinewave` to record the corresponding values of the sine wave at each time increment.

```
EDU» sinewave = sin(time)
sinewave =
  Columns 1 through 7
    0  0.5878    0.9511    0.9511    0.5878    0.0000   -0.5878

  Columns 8 through 11
   -0.9511   -0.9511   -0.5878   -0.0000

EDU»
```

I used the `sin` function on an eleven-element array of values (the `time` array), and Matlab calculated the sine of each of those eleven values and stored them in the `sinewave` array.

## Plotting the Sine Wave

Matlab has a "plot" command that accepts an x-array and a y-array, and draws a plot of y versus x. Both arrays must have the same number of elements.

```
EDU» plot(time,sinewave,'o')
EDU»
```

The plot comes up in a separate window, and looks like this:

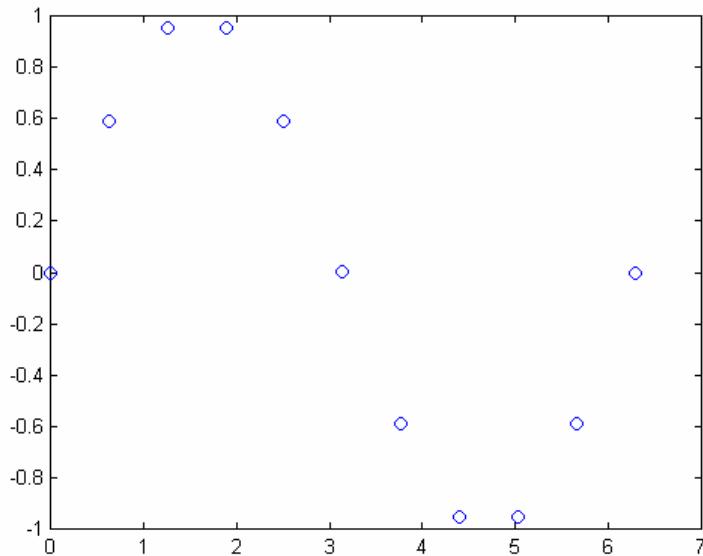


Figure 1: Full Period Sine Wave

### Summary of the example thus far

There are several things you should learn from this example. First let's review the Matlab commands I entered to create the sine wave plot.

```

EDU» delta = (2*pi)/10
delta =
0.5712

EDU» time = [0,delta,2*delta,3*delta,4*delta, ...
5*delta,6*delta,7*delta,8*delta,9*delta,10*delta]
time =
Columns 1 through 7
0 0.6283 1.2566 1.8850 2.5133 3.1416 3.7699
Columns 8 through 11
4.3982 5.0265 5.6549 6.2832

EDU» sinewave = sin(time)

sinewave =
Columns 1 through 7
0 0.5878 0.9511 0.9511 0.5878 0.0000 -0.5878
Columns 8 through 11
-0.9511 -0.9511 -0.5878 -0.0000

EDU» plot(time,sinewave,'o'

```

First, you can create an array in Matlab easily and directly by enclosing a set of values between square brackets. These values can be separated either by commas (as in the example above) or by spaces. Also, continuation from one line to the next is accomplished by three dots at the end of a line (...) to indicate continuation. I had to do this to enter all eleven values for the `time` array.

Matlab treats arrays the same as scalars. If I want to take the sine of 0.5, then I would write, `sin(0.5)`. If I want to take the sine of an array of values (such as the `time` array) then I would write `sin(time)`. Notice that I didn't have to define the `sinewave` array or dimension it or allocate memory for it, as I might have had to in another programming language such as C or Fortran. By typing in

```
sinewave = sin(time)
```

Matlab simply created another array called `sinewave` that had the same dimensions as the `time` array, and calculated its values element by element.

Finally, Matlab has a very useful plot command that does all the scaling and gridding for you. Your only responsibility is to supply it with an `x` array and a `y` array of equal size.

### **Example, continued: Plotting just the first quarter of the sine wave**

Continuing our example, let's suppose we're only interested in the first quarter of the sine wave, the rise from 0 to 1. The Matlab code to do this is shown below.

```
EDU>> time = time/4

time =
Columns 1 through 7
0 0.1571 0.3142 0.4712 0.6283 0.7854 0.9425

Columns 8 through 11
1.0996 1.2566 1.4137 1.5708

EDU>> sinewave=sin(time)
sinewave =
Columns 1 through 7
0 0.1564 0.3090 0.4540 0.5878 0.7071 0.8090
```

```
Columns 8 through 11
0.8910    0.9511    0.9877    1.0000

EDU» plot(time,sinewave, 'o')
```

The resultant plot is shown below.

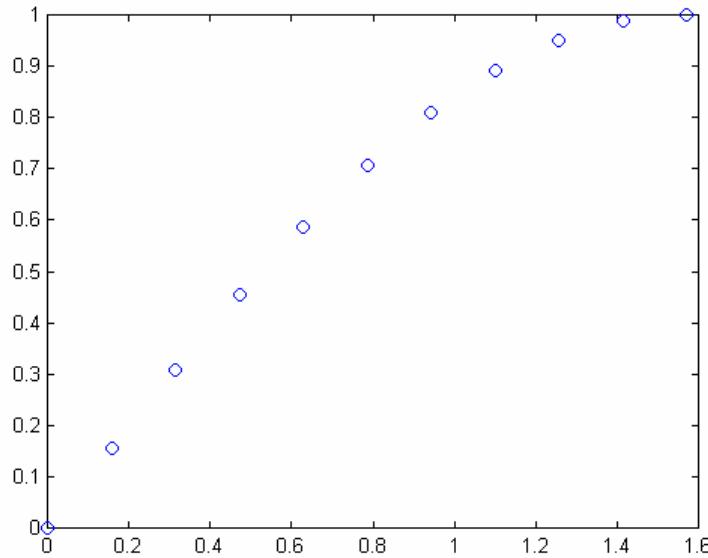


Figure 2: Quarter Period Sine Wave

Once again, notice how simple it is to operate on an entire array of values. If time was a scalar value, I can divide it by 4 just by writing `time/4`. If time is an array of values, then I can divide each value by 4 the same way, just by writing `time/4`.

### Stress Calculation Example, Revisited

Earlier, we created a script file (shown again below) to calculate the normal stress in a solid round rod when an axial load of  $P$  pounds was applied.

```
EDU» type stresscalc

% stresscalc.m  script file for calculating stress

P = 1000;
dia = 1;
area = (pi*dia^2)/4;
stress = P/area
```

```
EDU>>
```

We used this program to calculate the stress in a 1" DIA rod.

```
EDU>> stresscalc
stress =
1273.24
```

```
EDU>>
```

Suppose we have rods of 5 different diameters in stock (0.5, 0.75, 1.0, 1.25, and 1.50), and we want to calculate the corresponding stress for each of the 5 diameters. We could do this by making 5 copies of stresscalc.m, each with a different value assigned to the variable dia. That's pretty labor-intensive.

An alternative is to make the variable dia an array containing the values 0.5, 0.75, 1.0, 1.25, and 1.50. We can do this from the Matlab prompt as follows:

```
EDU>> dia = [0.5 0.75 1.0 1.25 1.5]
dia =
0.50      0.75      1.00      1.25      1.50
```

Remember, I can use either spaces or commas as separators when I'm constructing an array.

You can think of an array as a subscripted variable. Instead of having just one diameter dia, we can have 5 diameters  $d_1$ ,  $d_2$ ,  $d_3$ ,  $d_4$ , and  $d_5$  by making the variable dia an array. That's what I've done with the variable dia, above. Using square brackets tells Matlab that the variable dia has 5 values, dia (1), dia (2), dia (3), dia (4), and dia (5). I'll illustrate this by accessing a few individual array elements (below)<sup>2</sup>.

```
EDU>> dia(1)
ans =
```

---

<sup>2</sup> C-programmers will need to be careful! Matlab calls the first element in an array "element #1", not "element #0".

```
0.50

EDU>> dia(3)
ans =
1.00

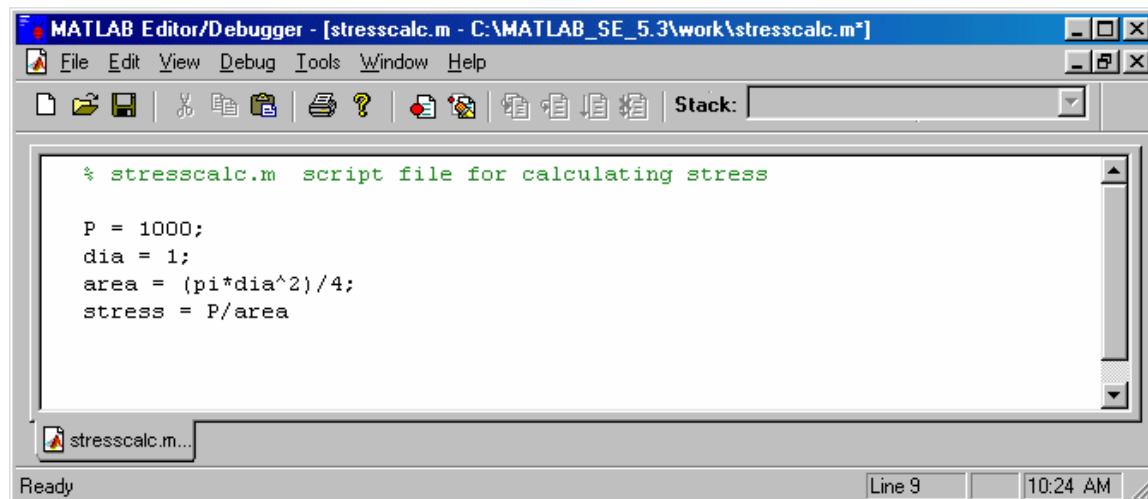
EDU>>
```

Now let's modify `stresscalc.m`, make `dia` an array, and calculate the corresponding stresses for each diameter.

I'll make the changes to `stresscalc.m` using Matlab's m-file editor, which I can start up with the following command,

```
EDU>> edit stresscalc.m
```

This command brings up the “edit” window, and the edit window contains my `stresscalc.m` file. It's just as easy (perhaps easier) than mousing over to the File...open menu option. Either way works! I'm now in my text editor, and ready to make the changes to `stresscalc.m`.



Matlab Editor Window

After making my changes and putting away the text editor, I'm back in the command window.

I'll quickly review the changes I just made by typing out the file from inside the command window.

```
EDU» type stresscalc.m

% stresscalc.m Calculates the stress in a rod

P = 1000;
dia = [0.5 0.75 1.0 1.25 1.50];
area = (pi*dia^2)/4;
stress = P/area
```

Now we can run the modified `stresscalc.m`, and have a single program calculate stress for all 5 diameters! This is demonstrated below.

```
EDU» stresscalc
??? Error using ==> ^
Matrix must be square.

Error in ==> C:\Matlab_SE_5.3\work\stresscalc.m
On line 5 ==> area = (pi*dia^2)/4;

EDU»
```

Wasn't that easy! Oops: maybe not so easy after all. It appears I made a mistake: Matlab is complaining about line 5 of my `stresscalc.m` program. It's telling me that it ran into a problem using “<sup>“</sup> (exponentiation). The problem seems to be that exponentiation doesn't work on anything but a square matrix. ?? What's all that about?

### We seem to have hit a snag

Our program didn't work, and the error message we're getting isn't making a whole lot of sense (yet!) The problem appeared when we converted `dia` from a scalar to an array. It would appear that exponentiation works for scalars, but doesn't work for arrays. Matlab identified line 5 as the offending line of code:

```
area = (pi*dia^2)/4;
```

A careful reading of the (rather cryptic) error message says as much.

```
??? Error using ==> ^
Matrix must be square.
```

To really understand why we hit a snag here, we must first understand a little more about how Matlab thinks of an array<sup>3</sup>.

### arrays and vectors (and matrices)

Matlab represents scalars, vectors and matrices using arrays. The variable `dia` in the program above, for example, is a row vector.

A row vector, you'll recall, is a vector having one horizontal row (and several columns), while a column vector has one vertical column (and several rows).

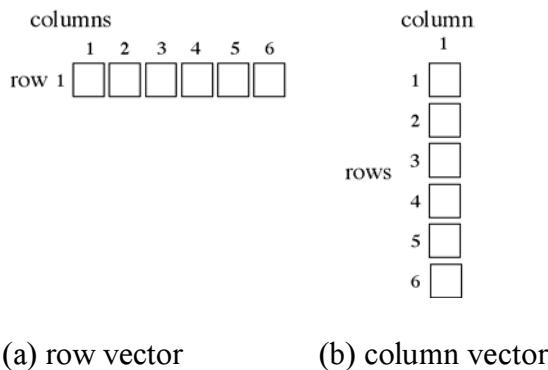


Figure 3: Row and column vectors

If I wanted to make `dia` into a column vector instead of a row vector, I could take the transpose of the row vector using the `'` operator. This is shown in the example below.

```
EDU>> dia = [0.5 0.75 1.0 1.25 1.50]
dia =
0.5000    0.7500    1.0000    1.2500    1.5000
```

---

<sup>3</sup> We'll come back and fix our "stresscalc.m" program after we've gained some insight into vectors and matrices, the subject of the next section. Right now let's put `stresscalc` on the back shelf and return to it a little later.

```
EDU» dia = dia'  
dia =  
0.5000  
0.7500  
1.0000  
1.2500  
1.5000
```

```
EDU»
```

I changed the `dia` variable from a row vector to a column vector using the transpose operator. I can change it back from a column vector to a row vector just as easily using the transpose operator again.

```
EDU» dia = dia'  
dia =  
0.5000    0.7500    1.0000    1.2500    1.5000
```

```
EDU»
```

I can enter column vectors as easily as row vectors by using the semi-colon (;) separator. A semi-colon basically says to Matlab, “end of that row!”. For example, suppose I want to create a second column vector of possible diameters. I can create that vector and enter its values as follows:

```
EDU» dia2 = [1.75; 2.0; 2.25; 2.50; 2.75]  
dia2 =  
1.7500  
2.0000  
2.2500  
2.5000  
2.7500
```

```
EDU»
```

I can access individual elements of a column vector as easily as I did a row vector. The third element of the column vector, for example, is accessed as

```
EDU» dia2(3)
ans =
2.2500
```

```
EDU»
```

A *matrix* is an array of multiple rows and columns, and it is entered just as you might expect:

```
EDU» mat1 = [1 2 3; 4 5 6; 7 8 9]
mat1 =
1     2     3
4     5     6
7     8     9
```

Here I've created a matrix `mat1` and entered it row by row.

Individual elements of a matrix can be accessed by referring to the row and column numbers of a particular element. For example, the element at row 3 column 2 of the matrix `mat1` can be accessed by

```
EDU» mat1(3,2)
ans =
8
```

Operations can be performed on matrices, just as with scalars or vectors. I can create a new matrix, `mat2`, by squaring `mat1`.

```
EDU» mat2 = mat1^2
mat2 =
30     36     42
66     81     96
102    126    150
EDU»
```

Remember that squaring the matrix `mat1` is the same as `mat1*mat1`, and must follow the rules of matrix multiplication<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>4</sup> If two matrices A and B are multiplied together to produce a matrix C, then element i,j of the product matrix is equal to the product of row i of matrix A and column j of matrix B. That is,  $C_{ij} = \sum A_{in} B_{nj}$

I can also multiply a row vector times a column vector, as shown in the example below. I have a row vector, dia:

```
EDU» dia
dia =
0.5000    0.7500    1.0000    1.2500    1.5000
```

and I have a column vector, dia2

```
EDU» dia2
dia2 =
1.7500
2.0000
2.2500
2.5000
2.7500
```

Vector multiplication is defined as taking each element of the row vector and multiplying by the corresponding element in the column vector, and summing the individual products. For this example, the result of the row vector dia times the column vector dia2 will be calculated as follows:

$$0.5*1.75 + 0.75*2.0 + 1.0*2.25 + 1.25*2.50 + 1.5*2.75$$

This operation is called the *inner product* of the row vector and the column vector, and it results in a single scalar value (11.875, in this example).

I'll do that same calculation in Matlab, and store the result into a new variable, dia3.

```
EDU» dia3 = dia * dia2
dia3 =
11.8750
EDU»
```

I am assuming that you the reader are already familiar with the rules of vector and matrix multiplication, and so I won't go over them further<sup>5</sup>.

According to the rules of vector multiplication, I *cannot* multiply a row vector by a row vector – that is an illegal (undefined) matrix operation because there aren't enough columns to form the inner product. This is demonstrated below.

```
EDU» dia4 = dia * dia
??? Error using ==> *
Inner matrix dimensions must agree.

EDU»
```

That explains the error in my stress calculation program. In attempting to compute the area corresponding to each diameter, I attempted an illegal matrix multiplication (row vector squared, which is the same as row vector times row vector). I can demonstrate that error easily enough in the code fragment below.

```
EDU» dia
dia =
0.5000    0.7500    1.0000    1.2500    1.5000

EDU» area = (pi*dia^2)/4
??? Error using ==> ^
Matrix must be square.

EDU»
```

When I squared the diameter `dia` (i.e. `dia^2`), I was attempting to square a row vector, which is the same as `dia * dia`. And that's not a valid matrix operation.

Fortunately, I can use the dot operator to perform the “square” operation element by element.

```
EDU» area = (pi*dia.^2)/4
area =
0.1963    0.4418    0.7854    1.2272    1.7671

EDU»
```

---

<sup>5</sup> If you aren't comfortable with matrix operations, now would be a good time to review a text on linear algebra. *Matlab* is after all an abbreviation for Matrix Laboratory.

If you look closely at the example above, you'll notice a period (a "dot") between `dia` and `^2`. This dot tells Matlab to *ignore* conventional matrix operations and operate *element by element* instead.

Another example might help illustrate this point.

If I have two matrices, `mat1` and `mat2`, I can matrix multiply them together *if* their sizes match up.

First I'll create two matrices of the same size

```
EDU» mat1 = [1 2 3;4 5 6;7 8 9]
mat1 =
1      2      3
4      5      6
7      8      9

EDU» mat2 = mat1 + 1
mat2 =
2      3      4
5      6      7
8      9      10
```

Next I'll multiply them together, *without* the dot operator. Matlab will use the rules of matrix multiplication to calculate the result (`mat3`).

```
EDU» mat3 = mat1*mat2
mat3 =
36      42      48
81      96      111
126     150     174

EDU»
```

I can also multiply them together element by element using the dot operator.

```
EDU» mat3 = mat1.*mat2
mat3 =
2      6      12
20     30     42
56     72     90

EDU»
```

This is a completely different matrix multiplication (using the dot operator) from the previous example (without using the dot operator), with a completely different result. Compare the two results to make sure you understand the difference!

Here's another example. I can cube `mat1` using matrix multiplication, or I can cube it element by element using the dot operator, as shown in the example below.

```
EDU» mat3 = mat1^3
mat3 =
 468      576      684
 1062     1305     1548
 1656     2034     2412

EDU» mat3 = mat1.^3
mat3 =
 1      8      27
 64     125     216
 343     512     729

EDU»
```

The dot operator is invoked by preceding the operator with a dot, i.e. `mat3.*2` or `mat3.^2`. Inserting the dot changes the operator from matrix operations to element by element operations.

This concludes our brief introduction to vectors and matrices. This is an important Matlab topic, and we'll certainly come back to it in much greater detail a little later on. But right now we have some unfinished business. With our new understanding of how Matlab handles vectors and matrices – in particular the difference between matrix operators and “element by element” operators - we are now in a position to go back and fix the errors in the `stresscalc` example program.

### Fixing our stress calculation example program

In our stress calculation example, we had an array of rod diameters and wanted to calculate the normal stress in each rod when it is loaded by an axial load  $P$  of 1000 lbs. The `stresscalc.m` program tried to do this:

```

EDU» type stresscalc.m

% stresscalc.m Calculates the stress in a rod

P = 1000;
dia = [0.5 0.75 1.0 1.25 1.50];
area = (pi*dia^2)/4;
stress = P/area

```

But when we tried to run it, we got an error message:

```

EDU» stresscalc
??? Error using ==> ^
Matrix must be square.

Error in ==> C:\Matlab_SE_5.3\work\stresscalc.m
On line 5 ==> area = (pi*dia^2)/4;

EDU»

```

We ran into this error because matrix multiplication (row vector times row vector, or in this case `area^2=area*area`) is illegal.

What we *really* want to do is operate element by element, which we can do using the dot operator<sup>6</sup>. The corrected code is shown below. Notice I made `P` a row vector so that I could divide `P` by `area`, element by element. I use the dot operator to calculate `area` (the dot between `dia` and `^2`) and also to do the division of row vector `P` by row vector `area` (the dot between `P` and `/`).

```

EDU» type stresscalc.m

% stresscalc.m Calculates the stress in a rod

P = [1000 1000 1000 1000 1000];
dia = [0.5 0.75 1.0 1.25 1.50];
area = (pi*dia.^2)/4;
stress = P./area

```

Let's try running it again and see if we have fixed the error.

```

EDU» stresscalc
stress =
1.0e+003 *
5.0930    2.2635    1.2732    0.8149    0.5659

```

---

<sup>6</sup> Refer to the discussion in the preceding section for information on the dot operator.

EDU»

The result is row vector of stress values. We now have a working stress calculation program.

## Part II: Basics of Matlab Programming

Working through Part I of this primer provided a general understanding of Matlab's capabilities as an equation solver. We wrote some very simple programs, gaining some familiarity with how to formulate equations in a format that Matlab can work with.

We now shift our focus to programming. As with most programming languages, Matlab supports structured programming (main programs and callable functions, scoping, data structures), conditionals (if statements), and iteration (for and while loops). We will investigate each of these in turn, but we'll begin with more information on matrices.

### Table of Contents (Part II)

#### More About Vectors and Matrices

- Creating vectors and matrices
- Colon constructor
- Linspace and logspace commands
- Some useful commands for working with vectors and matrices

#### Function m-files

- “Declaring” the function and passing in information
- More about the function declaration line
- Matlab Help and the function m-file

#### “If” Statements

- Relational operators
- elseif statements
- Exercises: conditionals

#### Looping

- for loops
- while loops

#### Input and Output

## More About Vectors and Matrices

Vectors and matrices are the basic building blocks we work with in Matlab. This section provides a better understanding of some of the more useful Matlab commands for creating and manipulating them.

### Creating vectors and matrices using direct construction

We've already looked at one method of creating vectors and matrices: direct construction. Using direct construction to create a row vector `dia`, for example, we would write

```
EDU» dia = [0.5 0.75 1.0 1.25 1.5]
dia =
0.5000    0.7500    1.0000    1.2500    1.5000
EDU»
```

Individual elements in the vector may be separated by either spaces or commas.

Using direct construction to create a 3x3 matrix, for example, we would write

```
EDU» a = [1 2 3; 4 5 6; 7 8 9]
a =
1      2      3
4      5      6
7      8      9
EDU»
```

Individual rows are separated by semi-colons or "carriage returns," as demonstrated below.

```
EDU» b = [2 3 4
5 6 7
8 9 10]
b =
2      3      4
5      6      7
8      9      10
EDU»
```

Direct construction works nicely, as long as there are not too many elements. Suppose, for example, you wanted to create a row vector of all the integer numbers between 1 and 100. Typing in all 100 integers would be arduous (and boring), so Matlab has other methods of constructing a vector (or a matrix). The first method we'll look at is called the colon constructor.

### colon constructor

To construct a row vector of all integer numbers between 1 and 100, use the colon operator as follows:

```
EDU» numbers=1:100;  
EDU»
```

I suppressed the output with a semi-colon, for obvious reasons. Here, Matlab fills in all of the integers between 1 and 100 (inclusive) and assigns them to the variable `numbers`. If we wanted just the odd numbers between 1 and 10 (e.g. 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9) we would type

```
EDU» numbers=1:2:9  
numbers =  
1 3 5 7 9  
EDU»
```

The format for the colon constructor is `start:increment:stop`. Leaving out the increment causes Matlab to default to integral numbers (that is, a step size of 1).

Can you figure out the contents of the `values` vector after the following assignment statement?

```
EDU» values=0.1:0.5
```

Try it and see if you're are correct!

*Exercise*

Create an array from 0 to pi in steps of  $0.1\pi$  using colon construction.

*Solution*

```
EDU» angle = (0:0.1:1.0)*pi
angle =
    Columns 1 through 7
    0      0.3142     0.6283     0.9425     1.2566     1.5708     1.8850
    Columns 8 through 11
    2.1991     2.5133     2.8274     3.1416
EDU»
```

The code in the parentheses  $(0:0.1:1.0)$  constructs a row vector that starts at zero and goes up in increments of 0.1 to a final value of 1.0. The result is

```
[0 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4 0.5 0.6 0.7 0.8 0.9 1.0]
```

By enclosing it in parentheses and multiplying by  $\pi$ , we get a vector that starts at zero and goes up to a value of  $\pi$  in steps of  $0.1\pi$ .

**Linspace command**

A third method for constructing a row vector is the `linspace` command. Checking the help text for the `linspace` function results in

```
EDU» help linspace
LINSPACE Linearly spaced vector.
LINSPACE(x1, x2) generates a row vector of 100 linearly
equally spaced points between x1 and x2.

LINSPACE(x1, x2, N) generates N points between x1 and x2.

See also LOGSPACE, :.

EDU»
```

Let's illustrate the use of `linspace` with an example. Suppose I wanted an 11-element vector between zero and  $\pi$ . I can create it using `linspace` as follows:

```
EDU» time = linspace(0,pi,11)
time =
    Columns 1 through 7
    0      0.3142    0.6283    0.9425    1.2566    1.5708    1.8850
    Columns 8 through 11
    2.1991    2.5133    2.8274    3.1416

EDU»
```

The advantage of `linspace` over the colon constructor is that I can specify the number of points I want to have filled in between the start and the end point: `linspace` will figure out the appropriate increment.

### Creating matrices

Matlab provides some very useful commands for creating “standard” matrices that can be used instead of the direct construction method discussed earlier. To create a  $2 \times 3$  matrix filled with ones, for example;

```
EDU» a = ones(2,3)
a =
    1      1      1
    1      1      1
```

```
EDU»
```

creates a matrix with 2 rows and 3 columns of ones.

To create a square  $4 \times 4$  matrix,

```
EDU» a = ones(4)
a =
    1      1      1      1
    1      1      1      1
    1      1      1      1
    1      1      1      1
```

```
EDU»
```

If only one argument is provided, Matlab assumes the matrix is square.

Matlab also provides a `zeros` command in case the matrix should be loaded with zeros rather than ones.

```
EDU» a = zeros(4)
a =
 0   0   0   0
 0   0   0   0
 0   0   0   0
 0   0   0   0

EDU»
```

The `eye` command is used to construct an identity matrix, as shown below.

```
EDU» a = eye(3)
a =
 1   0   0
 0   1   0
 0   0   1

EDU»
```

The command you choose to use will of course depend on the task at hand.

### Some useful commands for working with vectors and matrices

The basic building block in Matlab is the matrix, and Matlab provides many useful commands for working with them.

The *size* of a vector or matrix is often a useful thing to know. There are two functions for determining size:

`[r, c] = size(mat)` returns a row vector `[row col]` specifying the dimensions of the matrix *mat*.

`len = length(mat)` returns a scalar (in this case, *len*) containing the maximum dimension of the matrix *mat*.

Lets look at some examples to clarify the use of these Matlab commands.

Suppose we're working again with the `stresscalc` program, which looks like this:

```
EDU» type stresscalc.m

% stresscalc.m Calculates the stress in a rod

P = [1000 1000 1000 1000 1000];
dia = [0.5 0.75 1.0 1.25 1.50];
area = (pi*dia.^2)/4;
stress = P./area
```

Running the program from the command window results in the following stress calculations:

```
EDU» stresscalc
stress =
1.0e+003 *
5.0930    2.2635    1.2732    0.8149    0.5659

EDU»
```

Because I ran the script from the Matlab interpreter, all of the script file variables are in the Matlab workspace, and I have access to them from the Matlab command window. I can look at `stresscalc`'s `P` variable, for example, by typing in

```
EDU» P
P =
1000      1000      1000      1000      1000

EDU»
```

I can check on the length of the row vector `P` as follows:

```
EDU» length(P)
ans =
5

EDU»
```

Both the `size` and `length` commands will work on vectors as well as matrices, because a vector is a specific kind of matrix – that is, a matrix with just one row (and several columns). This is demonstrated by the `size` command, which will return the number of rows and columns in the matrix.

```

EDU» size(P)
ans =
    1      5

EDU»

```

Here we see that the row vector P has one row, and five columns.

**Question:** Will size and length work on a scalar as well as a vector or a matrix?

**Answer:** Yes: Matlab considers scalars and vectors to be special kinds of matrices, and treats them all as such. This is demonstrated below in checking in the size of the scalar pi and the scalar 4.

```

EDU» size(pi)
ans =
    1      1

EDU» size(4)
ans =
    1      1

EDU»

```

These are all considered matrices by Matlab, which provides a consistent and uniform means of working with every type of numerical quantity, vector, scalar *or* n x m matrix.

Matlab also provides a lot of very useful matrix operations, some of which are shown below.

<code>det(A)</code>	calculate the determinant of the matrix A
<code>inv(A)</code>	calculate the inverse of the matrix A
<code>inverse division</code>	calculate the inverse and perform the matrix multiplication

These are best illustrated using a specific example.

**Example: Solving a system of equations**

Suppose you wanted to solve the following set of 3 equations and 3 unknowns:

$$3x_1 + 2x_2 + 5x_3 = 15$$

$$x_1 - 3x_2 + 8x_3 = -20$$

$$4x_1 + 5x_2 - 7x_3 = 14$$

This can be represented in matrix format as the matrix equation

$$Ax = b$$

Where  $A$  is a  $3 \times 3$  matrix, and both  $x$  and  $b$  are  $3 \times 1$  column vectors, as shown below.

$$\begin{bmatrix} 3 & 2 & 5 \\ 1 & -3 & 8 \\ 4 & 5 & -7 \end{bmatrix} \cdot \begin{bmatrix} x_1 \\ x_2 \\ x_3 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 15 \\ -20 \\ 14 \end{bmatrix}$$

This equation can be solved for the unknown  $x$  by first calculating the inverse of  $A$ , designated  $A^{-1}$ . Remember that, by definition,

$$A^{-1} A = I$$

Where  $I$  is the identity matrix. Once we have determined  $A^{-1}$ , we can pre-multiply both sides of the matrix equation by  $A^{-1}$  and get

$$A^{-1} A x = A^{-1} b$$

$$x = A^{-1} b$$

Which is the solution for  $x$ .

This solution procedure only works, however, when  $A$  is a well-conditioned matrix.

Remember – some matrices are singular, which means they have no inverse. If a matrix is

singular, then its determinant will be equal to zero. Likewise, if a matrix is ill-conditioned, then its determinant will be near zero.

Let's solve this matrix equation using Matlab.

The first step will be to create the matrix A and the column vector b, as follows.

```
EDU» A = [3 2 5
           1 -3 8
           4 5 -7]
A =
      3      2      5
      1     -3      8
      4      5     -7

EDU» b = [15; -20; 14]
b =
      15
     -20
      14
```

Next, we'll check the determinant of A to make sure our solution procedure is valid.

```
EDU» det_A = det(A)
det_A =
      106

EDU»
```

Since the determinant is nowhere near zero, it has an inverse and we can proceed with the solution. Taking the inverse of A

```
EDU» A_inverse = inv(A)
A_inverse =
      -0.1792      0.3679      0.2925
      0.3679     -0.3868     -0.1792
      0.1604     -0.0660     -0.1038

EDU»
```

And multiplying it by the column vector b gives us the column vector **x**.

```
EDU» x = A_inverse*b
x =
      -5.9528
     10.7453
```

```
2.2736
```

```
EDU>>
```

Our solution, then, is

$$x_1 = -5.9528$$

$$x_2 = 10.7453$$

$$x_3 = 2.2736$$

We could also have solved this matrix equation using *inverse division*, as shown below.

```
EDU>> x = A\b
```

```
x =
```

$$-5.9528$$

$$10.7453$$

$$2.2736$$

```
EDU>>
```

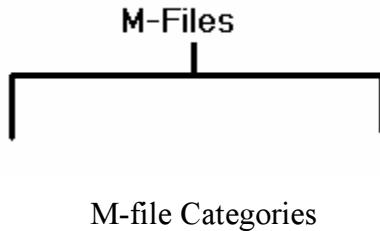
### When do you use inverse division?

Calculating a matrix inverse  $A^{-1}$  can be computationally expensive. When that is the case, it is better to calculate the inverse once, and use it over and over on different solution vectors  $\mathbf{b}$ .

This isn't always the case: many times there is only one matrix equation to solve, and one solution vector to compute. With only one solution to compute, inverse division makes sense because it's simple and straightforward to write.

## Function M-Files

There are two types of m-files: *script* m-files and *function* m-files.



A script m-file such as `stresscalc.m` can be thought of as a main program, while a function m-file can be thought of as a callable function (sub-program). We've already discussed script m-files in Part I. An example of such a file is our stress calculation file, shown below.

```

EDU» type stresscalc.m

% stresscalc.m Calculates the stress in a rod

P = [1000 1000 1000 1000 1000];
dia = [0.5 0.75 1.0 1.25 1.50];
area = (pi*dia.^2)/4;
stress = P./area
  
```

A *function* m-file allows you to implement a callable function. Suppose, for example, we want to modify `stresscalc` by having it call a function to compute the cross-sectional area. Let's create a function called "roundarea". I pass in an array of diameters, and it passes back an array of the corresponding cross-sectional areas.

I'll create a new file called "roundarea.m" using the Matlab editor<sup>7</sup>. After creating the text file, closing the editor and returning to the command window, I'll verify my new creation by listing it, as follows.

---

<sup>7</sup> The easiest way to create a new file is using the "File...New" command from the command window menu bar. If the file already existed, we could simply have typed "edit roundarea.m" from the EDU>>

```

EDU» type roundarea.m

function a = roundarea(dia)
% ROUNDAREA calculate the cross-sectional area of a circle
a = (pi*dia.^2)/4;

EDU»

```

We'll discuss this new file a little later – right now I want you to see it in action. I modified my `stresscalc` program to call this new function `roundarea`, as follows:

```

EDU» type stresscalc.m

% stresscalc.m Calculates the stress in a rod

P = [1000 1000 1000 1000 1000];
dia = [0.5 0.75 1.0 1.25 1.50];
%area = (pi*dia.^2)/4;
area = roundarea(dia);
stress = P./area

```

Notice that I've commented out the original area calculation (using the “%” symbol) and replaced it with a call to function `roundarea`. I'll run the modified `stresscalc` program to demonstrate that it produces the exact same results.

```

EDU» stresscalc
stress =
1.0e+003 *
5.0930    2.2635    1.2732    0.8149    0.5659

EDU»

```

Matlab implements most of its own functions in the same way. The Matlab “`angle`” function, for example, was discussed in the complex numbers section of this document. If we take a closer look at `angle.m`, we see that it is a *function* m-file:

```

EDU» type angle.m

function p = angle(h)
%ANGLE Phase angle.
%   ANGLE(H) returns the phase angles, in radians, of a matrix
%   with complex elements.

```

---

prompt in the command window. Since the file doesn't exist yet, though, Matlab would be unable to locate an existing `roundarea.m` file and would report it as an error.

```

%
% See also ABS, UNWRAP.

%
% Copyright (c) 1984-98 by The MathWorks, Inc.
% $Revision: 5.3 $ $Date: 1997/11/21 23:28:04 $

%
% Clever way:
% p = imag(log(h));

%
% Way we'll do it:
p = atan2(imag(h), real(h));

EDU»

```

Function m-files allow us to break our program down into smaller, more manageable subprograms: a very useful concept!

### “Declaring” the function and passing in information

The first line of any function m-file is the *function declaration*. From our `roundarea` example, the function declaration looks like this:

```
function a = roundarea(dia)
```

Values are passed in to a function through the input argument list. Here we are only passing in a single variable, `dia`. Matlab uses the “pass by value” convention when passing information into a function. This means that if the value of `dia` is changed inside the function, that change is *not* reflected in the calling program. This is a very important point, illustrated in the example program below.

```

EDU» type test.m

%
% program test
%
% this program checks to see if the value of the variable "dia"
% can be altered by the function changedia.
%
dia = 1.0;           % assign a value to dia
changedia( dia );   % change the value inside changedia
dia                 % no semi-colon: print out the value of dia

EDU»

```

The function `changedia` is listed below.

```
EDU» type changedia.m

function changedia( dia )
% CHANGEDIA: change the value of the input variable dia
% and see if the calling program is aware
% of the change.

dia = 2.0;

EDU»
```

What would you expect Matlab to print out when it gets to the last line of the main program and displays the value of `dia`? Will it be 1.0 or 2.0? Let's run the program and see.

```
EDU» test
dia =
1

EDU»
```

The value is 1.0, not 2.0, because changes made to the input parameter(s) inside the function are *not* passed back to the calling program. Information travels through the input variables in one direction only, from the calling function to the called function – not the other way around.

### More about the function declaration line

The function declaration is the first line of a function m-file. It declares the name of the function, and Matlab expects the name of the file to match the name of the function. If I write the function `roundarea`, for example, then it must be stored in a file named `roundarea.m`.

The function declaration begins with the keyword `function`. As we have seen, parameters can be passed in to the function by enclosing the parameter names in parentheses. If a parameter value is to be passed back to the caller, then the function declaration line will also declare the output variables. This is illustrated by `stresscalc`'s use of the function `roundarea`. Here the program `stresscalc` passes

in the diameter of a circle (`dia`) to the `roundarea` function, and gets back the corresponding cross sectional area of the circle (assigned to the variable `area`). The line of code where all this occurs is bolded in the listing below.

```
% stresscalc.m Calculates the stress in a rod
P = [1000 1000 1000 1000 1000];
dia = [0.5 0.75 1.0 1.25 1.50];
area = roundarea(dia);
stress = P./area
```

The value of the cross sectional area is calculated inside of the `roundarea` function, and returned. The output variable is declared in the function declaration, as shown below.

```
function a = roundarea(dia)
% ROUNDAREA calculate the cross-sectional area of a circle
a = (pi*dia.^2)/4;
```

Here the value of the output variable “`a`” is assigned as the value of `roundarea`, and returned to the calling program. The actual value of “`a`” is calculated in the body of the function.

## Matlab Help and the function m-file

Matlab has a very simple method for implementing its help function. When you ask Matlab for help on a particular function (such as `help angle`, or `help atan2`), it first finds the m-file that implements the function you’re interested in. It then reads in the initial comment lines, and prints them out. The Matlab convention is to make the initial comment lines of an m-file appropriate for providing help to a user.

The `roundarea.m` file, for example, begins with a single comment line below the function declaration statement (as shown below).

```
function a = roundarea(dia)
% ROUNDAREA calculate the cross-sectional area of a circle
a = (pi*dia.^2)/4;
```

When I type “`help roundarea`” at the command prompt, the following message is printed out in the command window:

```
EDU» help roundarea

ROUNDAREA calculate the cross-sectional area of a circle

EDU»
```

Matlab found my function m-file `roundarea.m` and then listed all of the comment lines after the function declaration statement and before the first executable statement.

## If Statements (Conditionals)

“If statements” are used to evaluate different conditions and execute the appropriate portion of code. For example, suppose we write a function that calculates the cross sectional area for both hollow tubes as well as rectangular barstock. Let’s create a function named `crossx`. Using “File...New” I’ll create a file named `crossx.m` as shown below. (Remember that the name of the m-file should match the name of the program or function. Refer to the section on function m-files for more information.)

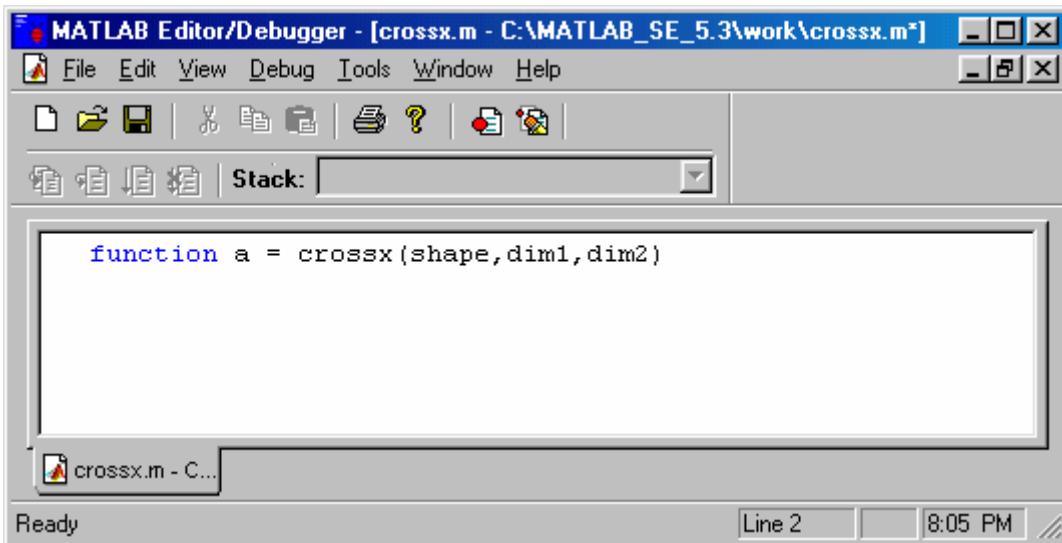


Figure: Creating a New Function m-file Named `crossx.m`

Our new function `crossx` will accept three input parameters. The first input parameter, `shape`, is a string that is set to either ‘tube’ or ‘rect’. The second and third parameters are the two characteristic dimensions of the shape. If the shape is a hollow tube, then `dim1` is the outer diameter and `dim2` is the inner diameter. If the shape is rectangular, then `dim1` is the width and `dim2` is the thickness.

We’ll use an `if` statement to determine the shape and calculate the cross sectional area using the appropriate formula. The function m-file is shown below.

```
function a = crossx(shape,dim1,dim2)
% CROSSX calculate the cross-sectional area of the shape.
%           Works with either hollow tube shapes (shape='tube')
%           or rectangular shapes (shape='rect').

if (shape=='tube')
    a = (pi*(dim1^2-dim2^2))/4;
else
    a = dim1*dim2;
end
```

If the expression `shape == 'tube'` evaluates to TRUE, then the subsequent area calculation is executed. If it evaluates to FALSE, however, the program assumes that the shape is rectangular, and calculates the area “`a`” as `dim1*dim2`.

Let’s check and see if this function is working correctly. We can do that with some test cases right from the command prompt, as follows.

```
EDU>> crossx('tube',1,1)
ans =
    0

EDU>> crossx('rect',1,1)
ans =
    1

EDU>> crossx('tube',1,0)
ans =
    0.7854

EDU>>
```

The general format of a conditional statement is

```
if expression
    set of matlab statements
else
    alternate set of matlab statements
end
```

## Relational Operators

To determine if the shape was a rectangle, the previous example used the *logical expression*

```
if (shape=='tube')
```

A logical expression (such as `shape == 'tube'`) is one that is either TRUE or FALSE. Matlab knew this was a logical expression because the expression involved a comparison of `shape` to `'tube'`.

Did you notice the use of the “double>equals” sign, “==” ? A “single equal” sign = is an assignment statement, and would have assigned the value ‘tube’ to the variable `shape`. A double-equal sign, however, tests to see if the variable `shape` has a value equal to ‘tube’. If it does, then the entire expression is evaluated and set to TRUE and the if statement reads, in effect,

```
if (TRUE)
    a = (pi*(dim1^2-dim2^2))/4;
```

and the subsequent statement (the area calculation for tubes,

```
a = (pi*(dim1^2-dim2^2))/4 )
```

is executed accordingly. If `shape` does not have a value equal to `'tube'`, the logical expression evaluates to FALSE and the subsequent calculation is skipped.

A logical expression involves a *comparison* of two things, and the comparison takes on a value of either TRUE or FALSE. Comparisons are accomplished using *relational operators* such as the “double>equals” sign, ==. Can you think of some other relational

operators that you would expect Matlab to provide in order to compare one thing to another?

Matlab provides the following relational operators:

<code>==</code>	equals
<code>&lt;</code>	less than
<code>&gt;</code>	greater than
<code>&lt;=</code>	less than or equal to
<code>&gt;=</code>	greater than or equal to
<code>~=</code>	not equal to

### **elseif statements**

An `if-else` statement is useful when dealing with two or more possible outcomes (e.g. “tube” and “rect”). But suppose now we wanted to expand our `crossx` function (from the previous example) to handle more than two shapes. To cope with more than two possible outcomes we could make good use of the `elseif` statement within our conditional. The general form of an `if` statement is

```

if expression
    set of matlab statements
elseif expression
    alternate set of matlab statements
else
    alternate set of matlab statements
end

```

(Note: the final “`else`” statement shown above is optional.)

Let’s illustrate the use of an `elseif` statement with an example by fixing a flaw in our `crossx` function. Right now if a calling program calls `crossx` with some shape other than ‘tube’, the program makes a leap of faith and assumes that the caller wants a

rectangular area calculated. Bad assumption! Here is the current version of the (flawed) if-statement:

```
if (shape=='tube')
    a = (pi*(dim1^2-dim2^2))/4;
else
    a = dim1*dim2;
end
```

If the calling program assumed that a triangular shape was implemented in `crossx`, it might call `crossx` as follows:

```
EDU» crossx('tria',2,1)
```

The calling program is requesting the area of a triangle with a base of 2 inches and a height of 1 inch. The `crossx` function incorrectly calculates the area of the triangle as if it were a rectangle (2 x 1 square inches) and passes the incorrect value back to the caller.

What should `crossx` have done?

At the very least, it should detect the fact that the caller was requesting a shape that it is not prepared to calculate, and display an error message. We can implement this response using an `elseif` statement, as follows.

```
function a = crossx(shape,dim1,dim2)
% CROSSX calculate the cross-sectional area of the shape.
%           Works with either hollow tube shapes (shape='tube')
%           or rectangular shapes (shape='rect').

if (shape=='tube')
    a = (pi*(dim1^2-dim2^2))/4;
elseif (shape=='rect')
    a = dim1*dim2;
else
    disp('ERROR: CROSSX.M: unrecognized shape.')
    a = 0;
end
```

Now our `crossx` function is a *little* more “bulletproof<sup>8</sup>.” The function now makes sure that the shape is one that it is equipped to deal with (either tube or rect). If it isn’t, an error message is displayed using the `disp` command. `disp` is a Matlab function that provides unformatted output, and it is very useful for reporting error messages and debugging.

`disp( displaystring )` types out *displaystring* in the command window

`disp( varname )` types out the value of the variable *varname* in the command window

We’ll discuss input–output commands such as `disp` in a later section.

### Exercises: Conditionals

1. Expand the `crossx` function to handle tubular (“tube”), rectangular (“rect”), triangular (“tria”), and hollow square(“squa”) shapes.
2. Did you notice that I used four letter identifiers (e.g. ‘rect’, ‘tube’, etc) in the preceding exercise? Try calling `crossx` with something other than a four letter identifier; for example,

```
EDU» crossx('triangular',2,1)
```

You would expect to get the prearranged error message (`'ERROR: CROSSX.M: unrecognized shape.'`), from the `else` statement in `crossx`, wouldn’t you? In fact, you would get the following error message:

```
EDU» crossx('triangular',2,1)
??? Error using ==> ==
```

---

<sup>8</sup> It is a little more bulletproof, but it needs more work. Make sure to look at exercise 2 of this section to find and rectify a significant shortcoming of this revised version of the `crossx` code.

Array dimensions must match for binary array op.

```
Error in ==> C:\MATLAB_SE_5.3\work\crossx.m
On line 6 ==> if (shape=='tube')
```

Please debug this program so that it doesn't self-destruct if the caller uses more than four letters to identify the shape. **Hint:** use the Matlab `help` function to investigate the use of the `strcmp` function.

## Looping

If you are at all familiar with other programming languages (and I'm assuming you are) then you know how important it is to be able to construct loops. A *loop* is a set of executable statements that are repeatedly executed until your termination criteria are satisfied.

Matlab offers two looping constructs: *for* loops and *while* loops. A *for* loop runs through a set of statements a specified number of times, and a *while* loop runs through a set of statements as long as its termination expression evaluates to FALSE. Each of these looping constructs is discussed below.

### for loops

The general form of the *for* loop is shown below:

```
for index = array
    statement(s)
end
```

Suppose, for example, we wanted to calculate the factor of safety for each of 5 rods of diameter 0.5, 0.75, 1.0, 1.25, and 1.5 inches. The rods experience 1000 lbs load in axial tension. Each rod is made of 1020 HR steel, with a yield strength  $S_y$  of 42 ksi.

One way to solve this problem is to use a *for* loop to run through each of the 5 cases. “For” loops work well when there is a specified (rather than an indeterminate) number of cases to run through. In this problem there are exactly 5 cases to consider, so we'll use a *for* loop from 1 to 5. My solution is shown below.

```
% program safety.m
% this program is used to calculate the safety factor
% guarding against a static overload for a round bar
% loaded in axial tension. The load P is 1000 lbs, and
% there are 5 different rod diameters. Results are
% plotted as a function of diameter.
%
% Author: FMKelso
% Date: May 31st, 2000
```

```

dia = [0.5 0.75 1.0 1.25 1.5]; % trial rod diameters
P = 1000; % axial load
Sy = 42000; % yield strength

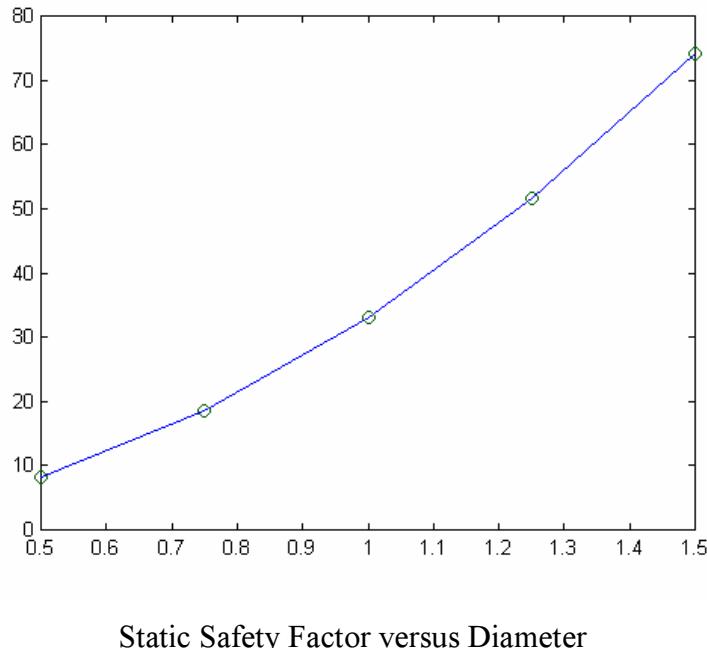
% calculate the stress and the safety factor for all 5 rods
for index = 1:5
    stress(index) = P / ((pi*dia(index)^2)/4);
    safety(index) = Sy / stress(index);
end

% plot the results
plot(dia,safety,dia,safety, 'o');

```

There are several inefficiencies in this program... can you find them?

Inefficient or not, though, the program works correctly and produces the following plot:



Let's review the program.

The program begins by initializing some variables (dia, P, and Sy). The for loop then iterates through all of the statements between the for and the end, one iteration for every column in the array.

```

for index = 1:5
    stress(index) = P / ((pi*dia(index)^2)/4);
    safety(index) = Sy / stress(index);
end

```

Here, 1:5 uses Matlab's "colon construction" method for creating a 5-element array (row vector) named `index`. The variable `index` is now equal to [1 2 3 4 5]. The first time through, `index` is set to the first element of the array (i.e. `index = index(1) = 1`).

The stress is calculated for the first diameter `dia(1)` and stored as the first element in the stress array, `stress(1)`. Next, the safety factor is calculated by comparing the allowable stress `Sy` to the actual stress for this case, `stress(1)`. The result is stored in `safety(1)`.

Having executed all the statements for `index=1`, the `for` loop goes back to the top of the loop, sets `index` to the next column in the array (i.e. `index = index(2) = 2`). `stress(2)` and `safety(2)` are calculated, and the loop counter is incremented, and so on. This continues until all the columns in the array have been visited. After `stress(5)` and `safety(5)` have been calculated, there are no more columns to the `index` array and the `for` loop terminates.

The next line of code is

```
plot(dia,safety,dia,safety,'o');
```

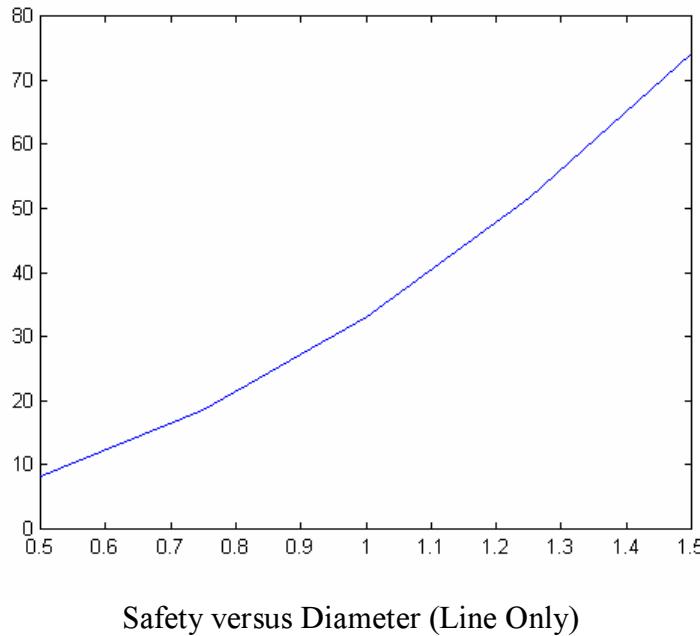
This plot command actually draws two plots simultaneously on the same coordinate axes in the same figure window. The first is `safety` as a function of `dia`, with a line connecting all the data points. The second plot is `safety` as a function of `dia`, but the '`o`' specifies that just the data points be marked with a circle. The result is a line showing the general trend of `safety` as a function of `dia`, with the actual data points marked by a circle.

Is that explanation of the plot command still a little “opaque”? Let me show you what I mean.

If I change my plot command (the last line in my program) to

```
plot(dia,safety);
```

It would generate the following plot:

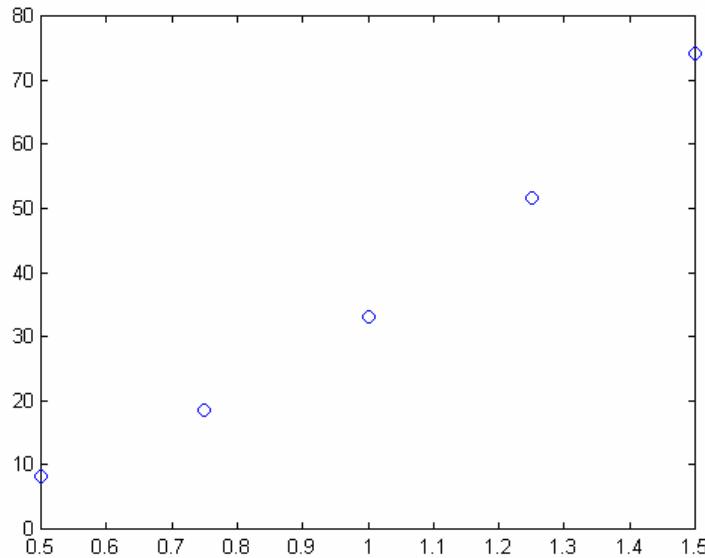


Just a line, without any circles marking the actual data points.

If I change my plot command to

```
plot(dia,safety,'o');
```

It would generate the following plot.



Safety Factor versus Diameter (Data Points Only)

Just circles marking the data points, without a line in between to help show the general trend.

What if you want both – lines and circles – on the same plot? One way to do that is the way I implemented it:

```
plot(dia,safety,dia,safety,'o');
```

### Try This

Modify the safety factor program as follows:

```
dia = [0.5 0.75 1.0 1.25 1.5]; % trial rod diameters
P = 1000; % axial load
Sy = 42000; % yield strength

% calculate the stress and the safety factor for all 5 rods
for index = dia
    stress = P / ((pi*index^2)/4);
    safety = Sy / stress;
    disp('safety factor equals')
    disp(safety)
end
```

Can you predict the output of the following program? Remember – a `for` loop will execute once for each column of the array.

***Answer***

Running the program produces the following results:

```
safety factor equals  
8.2467
```

```
safety factor equals  
18.5550
```

```
safety factor equals  
32.9867
```

```
safety factor equals  
51.5418
```

```
safety factor equals  
74.2201
```

These values are identical to the values calculated in the original example program. As you can see, the first time through the loop, `index` is set to the first column of the `dia` array, and so it takes on a value of 0.5. The second time through it takes on a value of the second element of the `dia` array, and so on, until all the elements in the `dia` array have been used. 5 results are printed, corresponding to the 5 elements in the diameter array, `dia`.